

Harry Stone Collection

By GEORGE T. MAXWELL, *Cartoonist,*
Wilmington (Del.) News-Journal

WHEN Uncle Si Perkins of Cornstalk Crossing emerged from the railroad station on his first visit to New York City, brushed the cinders off his linen duster, flicked a bit of hayseed from his gray goatee and took a firm grip on his carpet bag, preparatory to stepping out on Broadway, he had to run the gauntlet of slick confidence men eager to sell him gold bricks, green goods or the Brooklyn bridge. At least we must believe so if we are to judge by the many caricatures of the green countryman's visit to the big metropolis which appeared in the comic magazines of the eighties and nineties.

Puck, Judge, Life and other humor magazines contained hundreds of this accepted type of Rube together with other pictures which gave a good cross section of life in the big city two score or more years ago.

A collection of early cartoons dealing with New York City life in all its various phases, gathered under the heading of "Pickings from Puck," was placed on display in the Museum of New York City early in November and it attracted so much favorable attention and comment from the thousands of visitors who daily thronged the museum, that it was

scheduled to be held over until January 3.

These cartoons, selected from the collection of Harry Stone of New York City, all appeared at one time in the now defunct Puck magazine. In addition to Uncle Hiram and Aunt Becky, there were scores of other types associated by the comic artists and cartoonists with the early days in the metropolis. Most of these types represented distinct nationalities, such as the Irish cop, the German street musicians, the Chinese laundrymen, the walrus-moustached bartenders, with the ever-present backgrounds of horse cars, bootblacks, newsboys and street vendors. These drawings caught and held the life of old New York as no written words could do and the exhibition attracted more attention than any that has been held in that city in years.

About four years ago the College Art Association held an exhibit of the work of American cartoonists under the title of "Salon of American Humorists, a Political and Social Pageant from the Revolution to the Present Day," during which many fine drawings were first placed on display in New York and then sent out to numerous other large cities of the country. As acknowledged in the

catalogue of the association, a large percentage of these drawings were loaned by the Harry Stone Galleries. Likewise, during the past decade, exhibit after exhibit has been held with drawings loaned—or exhibited personally—by Harry Stone.

Over in Japan, where the war clouds now hover, a fine collection of cartoon originals hangs in a palatial home. Another collection graces the home of Russian nobility, while others may be found in Australia, Brazil and many other faraway countries—all coming from the Harry Stone Galleries in New York City. And scores of such collections hang in American homes.

One of our Western cities recently opened a million dollar club house and golf links and many cartoons pertaining to golf which at one time were in the Stone collection now decorate that club house.

And so it goes. The reputation of the Harry Stone cartoon collection is international. No series of articles dealing with such collections would be near complete without mention of the thousands of drawings which at one time hung—and many of which still hang—in his New York galleries.

The writer of this article is well qualified to speak from personal experience of the wide reputation Harry Stone enjoys in the art and bookshops of this country. Not only does the writer have a number of fine drawings in his collection which came from the Harry Stone Bookshop, but he had an experience about two years ago which may be worth recounting here.

James J. Walker, whose collection was described in the December issue of *HOBBIES*, had received a letter from a collector offering several drawings for sale at a price. Neither he or the writer were familiar with the artists mentioned, so they went to Philadelphia one day and visited three of the best known art shops in that city, all located within a short distance of Sixteenth and Walnut streets.

The man in charge of the first shop entered did not know anything about the artists mentioned in the letter. "But," he said, "if you will write to Harry Stone of New York, he will be able to tell you anything you want to know."

The proprietor of the second shop also could tell nothing of the artists, and he also advised getting in touch with Mr. Stone. After the man in charge of the third art shop read the names of the artists, he said: "No, I can't tell you anything about them but if you'll—"

"Get in touch with Harry Stone of New York," finished the writer and

Mr. Walker in unison, "we can find out all about them." And so we did.

Not long after that the daughter of Eugene Zimmerman (Zim), of Horseheads, N. Y., wrote to the writer to ask about the value of some drawings that had belonged to her father, who had died a short time before. The writer advised her to get in touch with Mr. Stone and he was later advised by Miss Zimmerman that the desired information had been promptly forthcoming. And so it is generally recognized in art circles throughout the nation and abroad that Harry Stone is the outstanding authority on American cartoons, and particularly of the work of Puck artists of several decades ago.

Mr. Stone's experience in first acquiring his vast collection of cartoon originals recalls to the writer's mind the story of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp. When Mr. Stone described how he first entered the room piled high with original drawings from Puck—and newspaper articles which appeared in the New York

press at the time Mr. Stone acquired them stated that there were sixty thousand drawings in the lot—it brought to mind little Aladdin going down into the cave at the magician's bidding after the wonderful lamp, and passing through the rooms filled with precious gems and gold. The writer doubts if all the jewels in existence piled in one room would bring to him the thrill that would have been his could he have entered that room packed to the ceiling with original drawings by the most famous of American artists and knew they belonged to him.

A few weeks ago Harry T. Webster, the famous cartoonist, had one of his noted "Thrill That Comes Once in a Lifetime" series showing a new art director telling an office boy to remove from the walls of the art room a lot of original drawings by Davenport, Oppen, Ding and many other noted artists. The thrill experienced by that office boy, and the thrill of Aladdin as he entered the cave of jewels, would be mild

Harry Stone, of New York City, whose cartoon collection is widely known.



compared to the thrill this writer would have derived from Mr. Stone's experience some twenty-two years ago.

Yet Mr. Stone assures the writer that he didn't get a thrill at all, in fact he almost had to be compelled to take the huge pile of drawings (think of that, fellow collectors, and join me in a big, hearty groan!) which would have made an ordinary collector turn green with envy just to view. And when one considers the fact that there were sixty thousand drawings in the lot acquired from the Puck editors back in 1915, Mr. Stone's supremacy in this field may be readily recognized, especially when it is considered that there are very few collections in existence today with more than 500 drawings listed in them.

However, his collection by no means approaches that figure today. Soon after he obtained the Puck drawings, which he stored in the basement of his shop in New York City, thousands of them were destroyed by a flood which partially filled the basement with water. Supplying various collections throughout the world further depleted his stock until today he has only a thousand remaining, but they are all fine ones picked out for his own personal collection. And while at one time his chief hobby was collecting old manuscripts and rare first editions, which he still follows assiduously, yet he admits that he gets a great thrill out of his cartoon originals and nothing pleases him better than to loan them for an exhibit that other collectors may see and enjoy them.

Among the drawings in his permanent collection are a number of fine examples of the work of some of Puck's leading artists which were drawn for cover pages of special editions issued under the title: "Pickings From Puck." Some of these drawings are shown grouped about Mr. Stone in the accompanying illustration.

In an interesting interview granted the writer by Mr. Stone he had the

following to say about the manner in which he first became a collector of cartoon originals.

"Around 1915, when Puck changed hands and a new policy was inaugurated, a large number of old drawings which were no longer to be used were purchased by me, en bloc, through the insistence of Mr. Gilroy, the then art editor. He had to practically use a gun to make me buy them at the time for I had no idea of what pleasure and adventure they would give me. The first thing I had to do was to move into larger quarters with a basement and upper stories where I could store the material. Shortly after that we were visited with a flood which damaged a considerable portion of the drawings and necessitated the destruction of several thousands of them. However, some of this loss was mitigated by the acquisition of additional drawings from the files of Life, Century, St. Nicholas and other similar periodicals.

"It didn't take long for the fact that the Puck drawings were in my possession to get around and pretty soon we had a more or less constant pilgrimage of visitors representing every walk of life, all eager to add to their collections. A million-dollar club house and golf links had recently been opened in a Western city and one of their directors, looking for suitable decorations, chanced into our shop one day with the result that all my cartoons relating to golf found their way to the walls of that clubhouse.

"The younger Matsu, representing a family known as the Rockfellers of Japan, purchased a fine collection that went back to Japan. A representative of the Russian nobility fell in love with the American manner of cartooning and another group went over the seas with him. Australia, Brazil—just a few of the far-away countries where my cartoons have found a home. From all over the world letters came asking me to assemble collections. This gave rise to a really serious problem. I found it

impossible to make selections. It was easier to part with the drawings when the evident enjoyment of the visitors to the shop offered compensation for my parting with them. But no such consolation was present with these absentee purchasers.

"As time went on I found that I had segregated certain homogeneous groups which I have more or less kept intact. They include a collection of several hundred pertaining to the aeroplane and ballooning, an equally large group on the automobile, another devoted to New York City in which its life, streets and buildings are portrayed. Represented in this latter group are many of the type appearing in the 1880's, '90's and 1900, showing the rube coming to the big city as depicted by the much bewhiskered man with carpet bag and umbrella.

"There are many groups devoted to the presidents—Cleveland, McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson, not to mention other prominent individuals like Rockefeller and Hearst. There are copious examples of the early comic strips in series of six or more panels as first published in Puck. I believe these were the first of the serial comics which took a certain character through various stages to get the proper punch at the finale.

"It might also be interesting to mention the process by which the drawings for the important double spreads in the center of the magazine were reproduced on stone, where the impression was taken on the two sides of a bristol board, one side being colored by the artist and used as a color guide by the printer, the other side remaining blank. These trial proof lithographs were usually limited to one—at least I have never found any in duplicate."

Mr. Stone declares that his activities in connection with the Puck collection have brought him great pleasure, not only the joy experienced by the real collector in the indulging of a hobby, but it has brought him into intimate and sympathetic contact with many men and women established (and then trying to get established) in the field of art and letters. A number of these contacts have resulted in lasting friendships.

That the collecting of cartoon originals, especially those with historic interest and value, is one of the finest of all hobbies is the firm belief of Mr. Stone. But he also feels that the American public has not yet given the recognition it should to the work of its great cartoonists of the past half century. He believes cartoon collecting is still in its infancy in this country, but that it has a great future ahead and that those hobbyists who

Original Drawings of Cartoons and Caricatures

That have appeared in
PUCK AND LIFE

between 1875 and 1915 representing

POLITICS, HUMOR, DRAMA, SATIRE

Selections sent on approval

THE BOOKSHOP OF HARRY STONE

24 East 58th Street

NEW YORK, N. Y.

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are collecting the work of the old masters today because of the joy and pleasure it affords them will some day find that they have made an investment that will repay them many times over for their time and trouble. He believes the early American humorists have so far been neglected in favor of the English artists, whose work is now held at a premium, but he is sure the day will soon arrive when this condition will be corrected and the American cartoonists will come into their own. When that day arrives, the collectors will reap their just reward. Many American cartoons he says, are gems of art and satire and really deserve permanent recognition.

This article has already extended to such length that there is not sufficient space to mention all the artists whose work is represented in the collection at the Bookshop of Harry Stone. Suffice to say it includes the names of such famous artists as Joseph Keppler, Sr., Joseph Keppler, Jr., Frederick Burr Opper, J. S. Pughe, Frank A. Nankivell, L. M. Glackens, Bernhard Gillam, Victor Gillam, Art Young, Eugene Zimmerman (Zim) F. G. Cooper, Thomas Nast, Thomas Worth, Frank Beard, Dan Beard, Frank P. W. Bellew (Chip), George B. Lukš, Grant Hamilton, W. A. Rogers, H. McPease, Dalrymple, Hassmann, Will Crawford, C. J. Post, E. W. Kemble, Robert Carter, Otho Cushing, Hal Green, Homer Davenport, C. G. Bush and scores of others of the prominent cartoonists of the past three-score years in addition to representative work by many of the leading cartoonists of the present day.